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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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NASS conducts new surveys and makes strides to reduce barriers and enhance equity in accessing vital agricultural data

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20, 2022 – As a new year kicks off, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) reflects on major milestones achieved during 2021. The agricultural community gained two new geospatial decision support tools, and will soon have first-time data on [hemp](#) production, conservation practice adoption motivations, farmer demographics, and [agroforestry](#) practices. Also throughout 2021, NASS conducted extensive research, development, and live tests of numerous core data collection- and dissemination-related systems. This ongoing work aims to increasingly modernize how NASS interacts with the public, making it easier for farmers and ranchers to ensure their voice is counted and enhance access for all those seeking NASS statistics.

“We are proud to deliver new and improved products and services requested by the farmers and ranchers from whom we collect data,” said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. “We recognize that quality data begins with the producers who take the time to respond to NASS surveys and that’s why our work over the past year strives to provide valuable tools and information that benefit not only producers but the entire agricultural community.”

The first geospatial product that launched in 2021, the [Crop Condition and Soil Moisture Analytics tool](#), provides soil moisture data important for crop planting, yield forecasting and weather monitoring. The second, [Cropland CROS](#), is a web-based, interactive query, mapping, and distribution system for U.S. crops. It updates the well-established Cropland Data Layer or CDL interface to provide intuitive navigation, searchability, analysis and export functionality.

In addition to delivering new policy-relevant surveys and geospatial decision-making tools, last year, NASS made remarkable progress behind the scenes to replace older statistical systems. These improvements will enable NASS to integrate new sources of data, better collect and use information, and create a more equitable, user-friendly interface for the public. Through modernizations that reduce the time needed to complete surveys and otherwise make response more convenient, NASS will reach more producers and continue to provide data that reflect the broad diversity of America’s farmers and ranchers.

“Over the next few years, we will gradually bring a more modern look, feel and ease of interaction to those completing surveys and using NASS data,” said Hamer. “We are excited by these transformative initiatives and are proceeding with testing and launching them. Rest assured, they will not ‘go live’ until we are certain they uphold our extremely high standards for security, confidentiality of personal information, and data quality so that NASS statistics remain the leading, trusted source of agricultural data.”

The five major NASS modernization efforts are:

- **NASS Respondent Portal – a NEW way of reporting agricultural data online.** More than a new way to complete a survey, this portal will provide respondents the ability to safely and securely respond to current surveys, view localized weather data, view data visualizations, and easily find the most popular NASS reports. By using an optional e-Auth login account, a survey respondent will be able to see upcoming surveys, view their previously reported data, and complete surveys without using a survey code. Participants will be able to give comments and suggestions for the new system via an online feedback feature.
- **Streamlined data reporting.** NASS has tested and operationalized the use of prefilled, previously reported data in multiple surveys. This is something producers have requested for many years. In testing, survey

respondents indicated that including their previously reported data eased their effort in completing the survey and improved their satisfaction. This is part of a long-range plan by NASS to improve survey response and quality.

- **E-mail and text survey reminders.** NASS is working to expand communications with survey respondents by incorporating electronic options, such as email and text, to provide survey reminders and notifications with links that will make it easier for farmers and ranchers to access their NASS surveys online.
- **Integrated modeling and geospatial estimation system (IMAGES).** NASS is developing a process to produce early and in-season corn and soybean planted acreage estimates in several test states. To accomplish this, NASS is creating dynamic, high-performance computing capabilities within USDA's cloud and analytics platform. This platform allows NASS to both leverage and automate the flow of data from a wide variety of sources, including administrative, geospatial, and economic data, in hopes of both improving the timeliness and quality of planted acreage estimates as well as reducing survey respondent burden. The research being conducted within IMAGES has also demonstrated the potential to identify and link agricultural land units to the NASS sampling frame, thus improving coverage of all farms and land in farms within the United States. The new computing capacity being developed by IMAGES gives NASS surge capacity, increases program effectiveness in data collection, and is spurring more coordination and increased productivity with other USDA agencies.
- **An enhanced, interactive data release system.** NASS is currently testing a new system that will change how people find, view, and query NASS data with a dynamic, user-friendly interface. Future web landing pages will be backed by databases that make related information easily available, searchable, and visualized by geography, timeframes, topics, and more during this multi-year project. This will make data more accessible to the full range of U.S. farmers and producers.

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NASS is the federal statistical agency responsible for producing official data about U.S. agriculture and is committed to providing timely, accurate and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

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